

A
LETTER
TO

Dr. *Andrew Snape*,

Occasioned by his

LETTER
TO THE

Bishop of *BANGOR*.



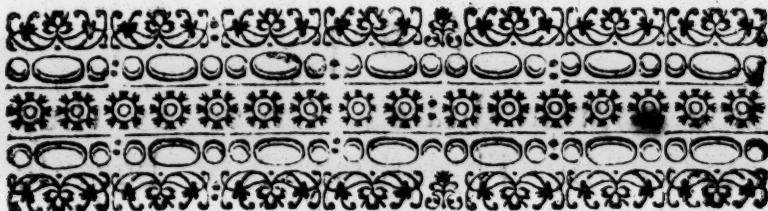
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L E T T E R

T O

Dr. *Andrew Snape.*

SIR,



HE first Day the Bishop of *Bangor's* Sermon was published I read it; and was pleased with it. The first Day your Letter to his Lordship, occasioned by that Sermon, came out, I likewise read it; but not with equal Satisfaction. My Reasons I shall give you (and as many others as shall think it worth their while to peruse them) in the same

same unpremeditated Order as they rose in my Thoughts: Not because I think it my Duty so to do ; but because it serves me for an honest Amusement, and will save me the Trouble of wrangling out my Opinion upon the present Debate in Cof-fee-Houses amongst the Men, and at Tea-Tables with the Ladies.

I was pleased with my Lord of Bangor's Sermon, because it seemed to tally with the Four Gospels ; and to have an Air of Plainness and Simplicity suitable to common Sense, and the free, disinterested Understanding of a Protestant Lay-Man ; which I have not often had the good Fortune to meet with in the Writings of the Divines of any Country.

I was as much dissatisfied with your Reply to the Sermon, because I thought you wrested his Lordship's Meaning, affected an unseasonable Turn

Turn of Wit and Raillery, and mixed no small Portion of Malice with your Arguments; which, I dare say, you have Sense enough to know was not commendable, at the time you were guilty of it.

You are pleased to set out with a Declaration, *That you have little either of Capacity, Inclination, or Leisure, to engage in Controversy*: Then you leave your Task unfinished; and conclude your Letter with saying, *I am prevented, by a very necessary Avocation, from offering some other Matters to your Lordship's Consideration, &c.* This Beginning and Conclusion put together have indeed cleared you, as to what you affirm of your Capacity and Leisure; but as to your want of Inclination to Controversy, I am still somewhat doubtful.

This last Paragraph of your Letter is as full of Malice and void of Argument,

gument, as if it had been penned by a resenting Woman. Therefore let me advise you for your own sake, not the Bishop's, and for the Dignity of your Function, to suppress it in the future Editions.

I will not pretend to enter into a formal justification in Mood and Figure of the Propositions contained in the Bishop's Sermon ; nor to reply after that manner to your Remarks : both the One and the Other requiring a previous Knowledge of what the World calls Divinity, which I am not possess'd of. Neither will I presume so far, as to say, That his Lordship has advanc'd nothing but the Truth : tho' you have not yet convinced me of any Error in his Discourse.

That Collection of Writings, which we receive under the Denomination of *The Scriptures*, contains so great a Variety

riety of Matter in as great a Diversity of Style, and is so obscure in many Places, so liable to different Interpretations in some, and so chequered with seeming Contradictions in others; that hitherto those Persons, who make it their Profession to study them, and would claim the sole Right of interpreting them, have either not been able, or have not been willing to come to any Agreement about the Meaning of them. This has induced me, for my private Satisfaction, to lay aside my Curiosity, and become a plain Reader of the Bible: and without regard to either the Fathers, the Commentators, or any Particular Sect of Christians, to regulate my Faith and my Practice by the main Drift and Scope of the Sacred Writings, more particularly the Gospels; in which the glorious Character and the wholesome Doctrines of *Jesus Christ* are express'd with the utmost Simplicity and Clearness.

This Turn of Mind has naturally disposed me to look upon all the different Christian Churches, which have appeared in the World since the Time of the Apostles, to be mere human Institutions, founded partly upon Scripture Authority, and partly upon the Prejudices and Passions of Men: And consequently to conclude, that all Churches, whether National, or not, retain a Mixture of Truths and Errors; are more or less pure, in proportion as the Ambition and Interests of this Life have usurped upon the genuine Doctrines of the Gospel of Christ. And yet for all this, I do not think it a commendable Thing in any Man to separate himself from the Worship and Communion of his National Church for Trifles. But if those Things, which seem but Trifles to me, do not appear so to another Man, I do not see any thing less, than a Perswasion of my own Infallibility, that can justify me in distressing him for his Opinions in

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Matters of Religion: neither will even That excuse me, if I follow the Example of Christ, who we may be sure was infallible.

What I have thus far premised is neither a direct Answer to any Thing you have advanced in your Letter, nor a direct Vindication of any Clause in the Sermon you have attacked. And yet it may perhaps open your Mind so as to make you see the one and the other in Lights different from those in which they have appeared to you.

Your first Charge against my Lord of *Bangor* is, in Effect, that he recommends Indolence and Inattention as Excellencies in Prayer: Whereas to me he seems only to condemn Enthusiasm, and to represent Prayer as a reasonable Act of Devotion. And the Texts you have quoted do not carry it farther: neither was the A-gony our Saviour was in, when he

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prayed, the Effect of his Prayer, but of his Passion and Sufferings. Certainly a Petitioner upon any Occasion may be very earnest, without using either the Gesture or the Language of a Mad-Man. Then you wonder his Lordship should not at least, for fear of being misunderstood (by such, I suppose, as are resolved to misunderstand him) throw in an Expression or two to guard the Unwary against any Possibility of being led into a Mistake. This puts me in Mind of a lazy, cunning Varlet I once sent upon a Message, that required some Expedition; but cautioned him, not to ride so inconsiderately as to break his Neck and endanger my Horse: Upon which the Fellow grew so very wise, and seemingly punctual to my Orders, that he walked the Horse going and coming, and, when I chid him for his delay, turned the Blame upon me,

Your

Your second Charge (which you have drawn out into Twelve Pages) against the Bishop is, *That we are taught by his Lordship to receive no Commands from any Superiours, whether Spiritual or Temporal, whether in Cases lawful or unlawful, in Matters relating to Conscience.*

The best and plainest Answer, I can make you to this Charge, will be by giving you an unprejudiced Abstract of those Pages in the Sermon, upon which you have formed it. After the Introductory Paragraphs, the Bishop takes Occasion from the Words of his Text to discourse upon Two General Heads. The First of which is, That Christ alone is the King and the Sole *Law-giver* in his *Church* or *Kingdom*: and that in the Affairs of Conscience and eternal Salvation, no Man upon Earth has any Authority. The Second is, That the Rewards and

and Punishments promised by *Christ* to his Subjects are not Temporal, but Eternal: And consequently, *that his Kingdom is not of this World*. Both which Propositions are very clearly made out to my artless Apprehension.

From these two General Heads his Lordship draws three Inferences. First, that the grossest Mistakes about the Nature of *Christ's Kingdom* or *Church* have arisen from hence, that Men have argued from *visible Societies* and *visible Kingdoms of this World*, to what ought to be *visible and sensible in his Kingdom*. Secondly, That They only are the true Subjects of *Christ*, who endeavour to conform themselves to his Laws and Will, as delivered by him in the Gospels; and do not derogate from his Authority, by relying upon the Judgments and Opinions of Men. Thirdly, That it destroys the *Rule and Authority of Jesus Christ*, as *King*, to set up any *Authority in his Kingdom*, to which his

his Subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to submit their Consciences or their Conduct, in what is properly called Religion.

Now in the fair and equitable way of arguing, your Business had been to consider the Truth or Falshood of these Propositions, one by one; and not to draw up a General Charge, so worded as to frighten ignorant and well-meaning Christians.

There is a notorious Fallacy in your Assertion, and no Occasion given for it in any Clause of the Sermon to a judicious and candid Reader. *In Cases lawful or unlawful, in Matters relating to Conscience:* so ends your Charge. Whereas if you had valued the Reputation of a faithful Interpreter, and of *so doing to another, as you would he should do unto you,* it would have been requisite to add a few Words more to the Sentence. This I shall do for you, and leave

leave you to judge, whether it had not been better, you had done it of your own accord. *In Cases lawful or unlawful, in Matters relating to Conscience*; provided we are verily persuaded those Commands are contrary to the express Will of God. This is plainly the Meaning of the Bishop; and this is a Meaning, which I hope you will not contradict. But nothing less would satisfy you, it seems, than to make his Lordship utter Absurdities, and to say, it is the Duty of a Christian to refuse Obedience to the Commands of his Superiours, for no other Reason, but because they are the Commands of his Superiours.

Your Third Charge against the Bishop of Bangor is, that he strikes at the Authority of the King and Parliament; at the Acts for preventing Occasional Conformity and Schism, and the Acts for securing the Protestant Succession. As this Charge, taken all together, is of a very dangerous Consequence, (and

(and more than probably meant as such) I think the Person, who takes upon him (of his own free Will) to make it in so publick a Manner, and to subscribe his Name and Titles to it at length, against a Peer of the Realm, ought in Justice and Prudence, to give very evident Arguments to support his Allegation ; and that without being called upon to do it, because his Accusation was voluntary, and no part of his Duty. This you have not yet been pleased to do : and I believe you will find it a very difficult Enterprize to bring the Legislative Power into so uncharitable a way of interpreting the Writings of any Man, who is of an unblemished Character, and much less those of a very learned Prelate, whose whole Life and Actions are inoffensive, and who has signalized himself by an uninterrupted Obedience to the Laws of his Country, and an unwearied Duty to his King.

Suppose you do infer from the Tenour of the Sermon, that no Prince or State has any Right from Jesus Christ, to compel the Consciences of the People in Matters purely Religious : Does it therefore follow, that the Authority of any Prince, State, or earthly Power is arraigned ? Do I deny the Omnipotence of God, when I humbly affirm, that he cannot perform Contradictions ? Or do I express my self agreeably to Reason and Christianity, if I should say, Queen *Mary* had a Right and Authority from the Gospels to burn Hereticks, as the Martyrs in her Days were termed ?

In the next Place, if a Parliament, surprized into over-hasty Resolutions, or miss-led by artful and ill-principled Members, should in consequence of this, prevail upon their Sovereign to give the Royal Assent to any Bill or Bills, which afterwards shall appear to be

be prejudicial to the Good of the Nation, or contrary to the plain Precepts of Christianity ; will any Man of Candour arraign me as a Contemner of the Power of Parliaments, if he happens to infer from a Discourse of mine, that I think such and such Laws ought to be repealed, or amended ? Do we not know, that it has been, and is the Practice of Parliaments to abrogate, suspend, alter and new-model old Laws, as well as to make new ones ?

That part of your Charge, which relates to the *Protestant Succession*, fills me with Indignation : and my Heart is the warmer in its Resentments, because your Prevarication in this Point is by so much the more gross, as this Branch of your Accusation more manifestly tends to involve his Lordship in the Guilt of High-Treason. Does it becomes a Man, who is a Graduate in Divinity, and has the Honour of

being Chaplain to his Majesty, to pretend to be ignorant of the Reason, why the *Dissenters* are treated with greater Indulgence by our Laws, than the *Papists* ! Must I be obliged to tell him, that it is not from a Principle only of Religion, but likewise of Policy ? The *Dissenters* have given the King and Government such Pledges of their Allegiance, Fidelity and Submission, as the *Papists* never yet did, and never can, till they renounce the Authority of the Pope. But let us suppose, that the Wisdom of our Laws in this Article regarded only the Difference between a *Popish* and a *Protestant Dissenter*, in Points of Religion : I hope the Chaplain of a Protestant King will not disown, *that a Presbyterian is better than a Papist.*

In a Word, you have either mistaken, or wilfully put a wrong Construction upon the Acts of Settlement and Succession. Their intent was not to settle

settle the Crown on this or that Prince as a Reward for his Religion ; nor to deprive any Prince of it as a Punishment for his Perswasion in religious Matters : but to provide in the best manner for the Preservation of the Religion and Liberties of a brave People, by disabling any Popish Prince from tyrannizing over Them for the future ; and by setting a Protestant King to rule over a Protestant Nation ; and farther, by obliging all succeeding Kings of *England* to be not only Protestants, but likewise to conform with the Established Church. Lastly, I think I may say (without Offence to either Law or Gospel) that neither Dissenters nor Papists ought to be put under any Hardships merely for the sake of their Perswasion : When they either refuse to give sufficient Proofs of their Allegiance, or shew by repeated Acts of any kind, that they are restless to disturb the Civil Government, and to overthrow the legal Constitution of the Kingdom ; then,

then, and then only, has a Christian Magistrate a Right to restrain, or punish them by proper Laws. So that this complicated Charge of yours against the Bishop, black as it is, seems to me to be False and Groundless ; and, I believe, I might add Malicious, without a Breach of Charity.

Your Fourth and last Charge against the Bishop is, That the Drift of his Argument is not only to subvert the Government of the Church of *England*, *but all Ecclesiastical Polity whatever*. Whereas in reality, the Drift of his Argument is to advance the Christian Liberty of the Gospels, against all Ecclesiastical and Civil Tyranny ; leaving every Sect of Christians to impose what Terms of Communion they shall think most reasonable and convenient ; provided they prove neither hurtful to the Civil Government, nor contradictory to the Will of God.

Having

Having thus gone through your several Charges, I come now to make a few Remarks, which may serve for an Answer to some Extravagant (though too generally received) Notions, which are either expressed here and there in your Letter, or will naturally rise from it in the Minds of your Readers.

First then, I must observe to you, That you all along fall into the common Error of taking the Clergy for the Church ; and the Ministers of the Gospel for the Congregations to whom they minister. No one will deny the Clergy to be Members, as well as Ministers of the Church of *Christ* ; and, I presume, I need not prove to you, that the *Laity* are by far the greater Number, and are as nearly concerned in the Promises of the Gospel, as the *Clergy*. The Officers are but a very small Proportion of an Army: But a very necessary one nevertheless. However, in a Case of Necess-

Necessity, the Body of the Army, without their Officers, would be of more Weight against an Enemy, than the Officers could be, when destitute of the Body of the Army.

In the next place, I think it proper to acquaint you, that it is by no means a fair Conclusion to say, that the Church of *Christ* is in Confusion and Disorder, because the several Societies of Christians differ in their Method of Discipline; no more than it would be to say, that an Army is in Confusion, because the *Troopers* and the *Dragoons*, the *Granadiers* and the *Musquetiers* differ in their Exercise and Manner of Fighting. They all agree in the End for which they bear Arms; which is to resist and overcome the Enemy; and they all submit themselves to a regular, though a diversify'd Discipline. But if some seditious and turbulent Spirits should raise a Division and Mutiny in the Army, by spiriting up the *Troopers* to say,
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the *Dragoons* were not Soldiers, and the *Musquetiers* to say the *Granadiers* were not Soldiers, because the Discipline of the former is more ancient ; this Practice indeed of stirring up some Bodies of the Army to *unsoldier* others, would soon make the bravest Army a Prey to the Enemy. Wherefore let not the Dragoon envy the Trooper his more slighty Horse and Accoutrements ; neither let the Trooper despise the Dragoon for the size of his Horse, and the meaneness of his Boots ; and let not the Musquetier repine at the portly Stature and embroider'd Cap of the Granadier ; neither let the Granadier look with an Eye of Contempt upon the more lowly appearance, and plainer Habit of his Fellow Soldier, the Musquetier. But let the one and the other strive in Unity, who shall be most punctual in obeying the Commands of their Leader. But above all, let not the Officers treat with Disdain, nor impose Hard-

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ships upon the Common Soldiers ; as knowing, that they are jointly engaged in the same Warfare, that their Lives are equally dear to them, and that in the Day of Battle the Officers can do nothing without their Assistance.

After this, I would have you consider, that though you are pleased to give some Hints about delegated Powers, Vicegerents and a perpetual Succession of Men (which is the boasted Topick of the Papists Writers) and do but just touch upon it, as if a Word to the Wise were sufficient and it were a self-evident Truth ; yet, give me leave to say, it still remains a very disputable, not to say Chimerical, Piece of *Orthodoxy* amongst Protestants. And suppose it should so happen upon Enquiry, or searching into *Church Heraldry* (as the *Cambridge Address* terms it) that the Fact should prove answerable to your Wishes ; I do not foresee what mighty Inferences you could draw from

from thence to the Advantage of Christianity ; unless your Eye be evil, because that of our Lord and Saviour is good ; and that you think the readiest way to make the *Kingdom of Christ* flourish and prevail over the Face of the whole Earth, will be by narrowing the Bounds of it, and cutting off at once all the *Christian Colonies* from what you may think the *Main Kingdom*. If this be your Scheme, I must for ever declare against it ; and that I may shew the Merits of our Two Opinions in as few and as plain Words as possible, I desire you to go Halves with me in an old *English Proverb* : *The more the Merrier, for me ; the Fewer, the better Cheer, for you.*

Lastly, I cannot help remarking, That you upbraid my Lord of *Bangor* for advancing in his Sermon, Notions unbecoming a Bishop. If the Notions he has advanced therein are conformable to the plain Doctrines of the Go-

spel, then has he done nothing, but what highly becomes a Bishop, and a Minister of the Gospel of *Christ*: If he has preached up any Notions contradictory, or prejudicial to the said Gospel, it was incumbent on you, since you were resolved to write, to give the Publick Proofs thereof; and those very positive and evident. For my Part, when I read the Sermon, which you have so severely and so dogmatically censured, I am charmed to find a Bishop guarding the Purity of the Christian Religion against the Incursions of the Temporal Power; and exhorting the *Laity* to hold fast the *Gospel-Freedom*, which they have received from *Christ*, their sole Law-giver and King. This disinterested and generous Disposition of Mind in a Prelate, is by so much the more to be admired and honoured, as such Instances are (with Sorrow I speak it) but very rare in any Age or Country. This calls to my Remembrance, the Magnanimity

manity and Indulgence of our present King towards his Subjects ; when in repeated Instances he animates his People from the Throne, manfully to stand up in the Defence of their Rights and Liberties ; for which, I am apt to believe, as few Sovereign Princes will think themselves beholden to his Majesty, as Bishops will thank my Lord of *Bangor* for his excellent Sermon.

I think it necessary to remind you, that you do not seem to have proved any one Objection, you have started, to the Sermon. It is not unlikely, you were very well aware of the strong Delusion, by which the far greatest Number of your Readers are led Captives ; so that indeed you needed not to be at the Expence of Argument : it was sufficient for your Purpose barely to affirm such popular Errors, as might serve your Turn, and to depend upon the Prejudices of the People for their Convicti-

Conviction. On the other Hand, I humbly conceive, I have proved, tho' not in a Scholastick manner, several Things against you ; and others I have partly taken for granted, as requiring no Proof to a Protestant Reader of common Sense and an ingenuous Mind. But let us suppose, I have not this Advantage, I pretend to, over you ; yet, even then, the Wrong and Injustice will lie on your Side : Since it is an avowed Rule in all Cases, that the Accuser should be much clearer and fuller in his Proofs of any Charge, than the Person who undertakes to defend it. Humanity, Charity, and Equity it self will make considerable Allowances for the Defendant ; at the same time that a strong and convincing Evidence shall be required from the Plaintiff, especially when no Personal Wrong was done, nor intended against him.

Before I conclude, I have one small Favour to request of you (and my other

ther Readers) in behalf of the Bishop of *Bangor* and my self ; which is, That you would seriously peruse the Four Gospels, his Lordship's Sermon, your own Letter, and mine, before you proceed to form any farther Resolutions upon the present Debate, or determine with your self to acquiesce in the Judgment you have already made Publick upon it. And when you shall hereafter think fit to enter upon **Controversy**, I earnestly intreat you not to undertake it without a sufficient Competency of Leisure, Capacity and Inclination.

I am, *SIR*,

Your very humble Servant, &c.

May 15.

1717.

